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ABSTRACT

An advisory committee comprised of school officials and community members was formed to assess the provision of special vocational programming to handicapped students served by the Vigo County School Corporation (Indiana). The committee examined student needs-related, school and curriculum-related, and business-related issues addressed in Federal legislation concerning vocational education and special needs populations (with special focus on the provisions of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984). The committee concluded that the county should develop programs to provide employability training in the school, a transition program from school to the community, and actual experiences and training in work stations throughout the community. It was also recommended that the county (1) develop a comprehensive career awareness/education program early in the special education curriculum, (2) implement a comprehensive vocational assessment program for all special students, and (3) establish cooperative and information-sharing procedures with all local organizations involved in job placement and followup for handicapped individuals. (MN)

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Transitions From School to Work: Helping the Special Student

By
A.R. Putnam, Ed.D., Chair, Vigo County, Indiana,
School/Community Advisory Committee for Vocational
Special Education Planning

Commissioned by the Administration and
Board of Vigo County, Indiana, School Corporation,
Terre Haute, Indiana, Dr. Duane Moore, Superintendent

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Introduction

"Americans are proud that our public education system is accessible to all and that our society is committed to a quality high school education for everyone. The pride is justified--but tempered by disappointment, for despite all of our efforts, we have not reached our goal." (NAT COM on SEC VO ED 1984) Nationally one of the strongest disappointments is in the area of employment training for special students, particularly those with the physical and mental handicaps. Handicapped youth are leaving the educational system without the skills necessary to compete in the world of work. More than sixty percent of all handicapped people are unemployed during a typical year. The average wage for those handicapped persons who are employed is much lower than their non-handicapped counterparts.

In response to these and other alarming statistics a school/community advisory committee was established on May 30, 1985 to explore the nature of services needed in Vigo County to facilitate the transition of youth who are classified as mildly through severely handicapped into independent or semi-independent work activities. The task of the committee was to provide recommendations concerning the type of vocational programming necessary to prepare these students to adapt to a broader community. The specific task of the committee was (1) to examine the status of current programs, (2) to consider future program needs, and (3) to make recommendations which might be developed in order to better serve the needs of the population under consideration and to suggest directions of action in order to achieve the desired goal. The committee was to function in an advisory capacity to the superintendent and administration of the Vigo County School Corporation.

The initial meeting of the school/community advisory committee for special education vocational planning was held on July 18, 1985 in the

Conference Room of the Administration Building, Vigo County Schools. The committee continued to meet throughout 1985 on a regular bi-monthly basis. Active members of the committee were:

James Boland, Teacher
Terre Haute North Vigo High School

Nancy Brown
Hamilton Center

Glenden Campbell
Assist. Director of Gen. Services
Vigo County School Corporation

Earlene Carpenter, Parent
ARC Representative

Lorie Clayton
Hamilton Center

Jonathan Cottrell, Director
of Vocational Education
Vigo County School Corporation

Marilyn Faris, Assistant Director
Covered Bridge Special Ed. District

Sheila Glynn, Treatment Director
Vigo County Group Homes

Bernie Hamilton, Teacher
Terre Haute North Vigo High School

Theresa Haverkamp, Counselor
Honey Creek Junior High School

Norman Howard, Manager
Brick Oven Bakery

Steve Huddleston, Executive Mgr.
Ponderosa Steak House

Becky Kirk, Parent

Diana Macak, Teacher
Terre Haute North Vigo High School

Jim Malloy, Principal
Chauncey Rose Junior High School

Paul Meyer, PVE Coordinator
Covered Bridge Special Education
District

Barbara Snowden, Curriculum Coord./
Education Specialist

Diane Unger, Teacher
Chauncey Rose Junior High School

Bob Wallace
Wallace Nursing Center

Rita Worrall
State Board of Vocational and
Technical Education

A.R. Putnam
Dept. of Industrial Technology
Education
Indiana State University
Committee Chair

The Legislative Mandate

Federal legislation has provided for assistance to populations with special needs for over 100 years. As early as 1865, returning disabled veterans were provided with a stipend. In 1918 Congress enacted the Smith--Sears Act, which provided for vocational rehabilitation for returning disabled World War I veterans. In 1920, the Smith-Fess Act, or Vocational Rehabilitation Act providing for rehabilitation services to civilians, was passed into law. While this legislation had limited impact on disabled workers, it did prove revolutionary in later legislation. One of those provisions was to make administration of the act the responsibility of the Federal Board of Vocational Education. With this act, vocational educators formally became responsible for working with the disabled and handicapped. An oncoming wave of social legislation was signaled in 1961 with the Area Redevelopment Act, the Manpower and Training Act of 1962, the Vocational Education Act of 1963, and the Vocational Amendments of 1968.

Subsequent legislation, particularly sections 503 and 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 clearly established vocational education, including job placement as a right of persons with handicaps. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 specified that an Individual Educational Program (IEP) must be written for each identified child, and the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 specifically included the disadvantaged and handicapped under separate categorical funding. Further, the 1975 legislation as one of its major provisions declared that, as far as possible, the special student must be mainstreamed into the regular school program. According to this legislation: (1) handicapped persons are to be educated with people who are not handicapped to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the handicapped person, (2) handicapped students are entitled

an appropriate assessment, and (3) must be followed by education designed to meet their needs. These public laws and regulations refer to each other in that each law must be carried out in a compatible and cooperative manner with the parallel law.

In October of 1984, President Reagan signed into law the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984. The law itself states that one of its major purposes is to insure access to vocational education for the disadvantaged and handicapped. (Section .2.2). Under Title II, Part A, thirty-two percent of funds are to be set aside for the vocational education of the handicapped and disadvantaged. The act further challenges local education agencies to increase and improve vocational opportunities for individuals with disadvantaged and handicapping conditions. Among these challenges are:

(1) increase and improve career development services which will help ease the transition from secondary vocational education to advanced training, including post-secondary, or to employment.

(2) increase supportive services to help students achieve marketable skills.

(3) provide a process for assessing vocational career development needs.

(4) increase the awareness of parents of and students of vocational and technical education opportunities.

(5) improve coordination of services at the state and local levels.

(6) assure equal access to the full range of vocational programs to currently underserved populations.

There are five major provisions of the act which must be considered in planning services or delivery systems to special students. These provisions are:

(1) funds set aside for handicapped and disadvantaged students can only be used for supplemental or additional staff, materials, and services (not provided to other individuals in vocational education) that are essential for individuals to participate and succeed in vocational education.

(2) If the conditions of handicapped and disadvantaged students require separate programs, each eligible recipient may use these funds only for the cost of services and activities, in separate vocational education programs for handicapped and disadvantaged individuals, which exceed the average per pupil expenditure for the comparable regular vocational education services and activities in the local education agency.

(3) Vocational education for handicapped individuals must be provided in the least restrictive environment. The IEP must be planned through the coordination of appropriate representatives of vocational education (potential vocational teachers and administrators of vocational programs in which students are enrolled) and in special education. Each handicapped student enrolled in vocational education programs shall receive an assessment, special services including adaptation of curriculum and instruction, equipment, and facilities, guidance counseling and career development, and counseling services assigned to facilitate transition from school to post-school employment and career opportunities. Each eligible recipient that receives an allocation of funds for handicapped shall provide information to handicapped and disadvantaged students and their parents concerning the opportunities available in vocational education. This is to be provided at least one year before the

students enter the grade level at which vocational educational programs are generally available but no later than the ninth grade. Mainstreaming students into regular vocational programs is clearly the emphasis of the act. Disadvantaged and handicapped set aside funds under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act must be used to help pay the cost of supplemental or additional staff, services, or material needed to provide quality vocational opportunities for targeted populations. Such services must be delivered systematically, beginning with recruitment, and ending with sustained employment.

Addressing the Challenge

In order to address the challenges presented, the committee generated fifteen issues involving special population vocational needs with which they should deal. The issues were:

(1) Definition of vocational education for the handicapped.

(2) Basic home and community skills--curriculum for moderately and severely handicapped.

(3) Teacher in-service training.

(4) Use of resources in the community.

(5) Expectations for vocational and special education teachers.

(6) Involvement of students with employers.

(7) Job placement for handicapped students.

(8) Public relations within the community.

(9) Program development.

(10) Community based education.

(11) Staff needs.

(12) Vocational evaluation.

(13) Curricular materials.

(14) Community funding and support.

(15) Employment follow-up after graduation.

It was determined that issues could be given more comprehensive and organized consideration if sub-committees were formed to deal with them. The issues were divided into the general areas of school and curriculum related issues, business related issues, and community related issues. Some issues received consideration from more than one committee. Committee members then assigned themselves to one of the three groups based upon their expertise and interest.

The school and curriculum related issues included the following:

(1) Definition of vocational education for the handicapped.

(2) Basic home and community skills - curriculum for moderately and severely handicapped.

(3) Teacher in-service training.

(4) Expectations of vocational an special education teachers.

(5) Program development.

(6) Community-based education.

(7) Staff needs.

(8) Curricular materials.

The community related issues included:

(1) Basic home and community skills - curriculum for moderately and severely handicapped.

(2) Job placement for handicapped students.

(3) Public relations within the community.

(4) Vocational evaluation.

(5) Community funding and support.

(6) Employment follow-up after graduation.

The business-related issues included:

(1) Use of resources in the community.

(2) Job placement for handicapped students.

(3) Public relations within the community.

(4) Involvement of students with employers.

(5) Teacher in-service training.

The first order of business for each subcommittee was to determine information needed to develop a concise and accurate picture of the existing status regarding the issues being considered. Information was gathered from site visits to schools, community agencies and businesses employing the handicapped, data from the school corporation, the Covered Bridge Special Education District and business, interviews, and related literature. After the information was collected by the subcommittees and presented to the entire committee, the next consideration was a statement of goals. A goal was to be developed for each issue stating where the school corporation should be relevant to that issue in the future. After the goals were shared by the entire committee to ensure consensus, the subcommittee then developed recommendations regarding how individual goals might best be attained. Some goal statements and recommendations reflected the interrelationship of the various issues.

Report of the Subcommittee on School and Curriculum-Related Issues

The Subcommittee on school and curriculum-related issues finds the adoption of a comprehensive definition for vocational education for the handicapped to be central to its mission. We recommend that the following definition be adopted by Vigo County School Corporation as a guide to develop curriculum materials and train teachers.

DEFINITION FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR HANDICAPPED

Vocational education for the handicapped is that part of the educational program which creates an awareness and appreciation of the world of work, by identifying and developing early in the student's school life all those skills which can be developed into employability skills. Vocational education for the handicapped should develop the student's skills by providing programs which will involve training for entry level skills, including preparation for competitive employment. Vocational education for the handicapped encompasses the regular vocational education program, regular vocational education with modifications, special vocational education, and separate lab programs. Programs should be developed to provide employability training in the school, a transition program from school to the community, and actual experience and training in work stations throughout the community.

Specific recommendations to help facilitate this definition include the following areas:

Teacher In-service Training: In-service training is needed for vocational teachers to help them better understand various handicapping conditions and in developing techniques for teaching the handicapped. In-service training is also needed for special education teachers to help them better understand the nature of employability skills and vocational education in general.

Vocational Evaluation: Vocational aptitude and interests should be assessed. This should initially occur during the upper elementary school years and should include parent input. A re-evaluation should occur at the secondary level for all special education students.

Vocational/Special Education Curriculum: A vocational education/special education curriculum committee should be formed and trained in curriculum

modification. This committee should begin an extensive search for modified vocational curriculum for special populations and review vocational curriculum programs and materials representing various implementation plans. This committee should serve in an advisory capacity on all curriculum matters in vocational/special education throughout the corporation. This committee could also serve as a valuable tool for in-service training for teachers in materials modification.

Vocational/Special Education Program Development: New vocational programs and community-based programs should be developed for handicapped students. In-school training stations should be utilized as preparation for community-based placement. Handicapped students should receive community-based training as part of their transitional program prior to possible job placement. Pilot projects in individual school buildings which take into account the uniquenesses of the building, the personnel and the students' needs should be developed. Examples of programs which could be implemented include child care through home economics, landscaping and gardening, or car care/home care. Vocational or occupational experiences for handicapped students need to begin early in the elementary program. In order to facilitate the progress of handicapped students in regular vocational classes, it is recommended that the corporation explore the use of teacher aides in support of the least restrictive environment. It is also recommended that peer and cadet tutors be used in vocational programs.

Vocational Placement: A needs assessment regarding available jobs in this geographic area which our students could fill should be done with input from the school corporation, Hamilton Center, the Private Industry Council, and vocational rehabilitation services.

REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY RELATED ISSUES

The subcommittee on community related issues recommends a focus on the following three goals:

(1) Development of a comprehensive careers awareness/education program early in the special education curriculum. This program should continue and focus on job preparation at the secondary level.

(2) Implementation of a comprehensive vocational assessment program for all special students.

(3) Establishment of cooperative and information-sharing procedures with all local organizations involved in job placement and follow-up for the handicapped.

In order to attain these goals the subcommittee for community related issues makes the following specific recommendations:

Career Awareness: Vigo County School Corporation should begin a career awareness continuum program which begins with occupational awareness in the early elementary years and ends with post-secondary job placement. In the intermediate years organize and implement a regular program of employers visiting classes which are followed by the class then visiting the employer at the job site. In the junior high years the focus should be on people working and jobs. Methodology should include visits from employers, films, field trips, and further occupational exploration through job site experience. By the senior high level in-school work stations should be alternated with community-based training sites. Job-keeping skills and job-seeking skills should become a regular part of the entire curriculum and should be a regular focus throughout the curriculum. The skills should include interviewing, punctuality, dependability, mobility, and the importance of the work ethic as well as other traditional employability skills. Where traditional funding

sources are not available or inadequate, non-traditional community-based funding sources should be sought. In order to facilitate this comprehensive career education program, a public awareness program should be implemented. Community and parent involvement should be constantly sought. The school program should be promoted by the development of a slide presentation with audio as well as presentations by parent and school personnel to community agencies, Rotary, Kiwanis, Jaycees, individual businessmen and other school groups. This presentation should promote and publicize the efforts of Vigo County Schools in the career education of handicapped persons.

Vocational Assessment: Vigo County should institute a vocational evaluation program at the intermediate level. The program should assess the vocational potential and occupational preference of students and include parent input. The vocational evaluation program should be a regular part of aforementioned career education program.

Job Placement and Follow-up: The career education program of the school corporation should include a regular placement and follow-up component. Parts of this component include regular monthly information-sharing meetings involving job placement services, in which job leads are shared, problems are discussed, solutions are formulated and job development ideas are shared. This component, in order to function properly, must be composed of school personnel, community agencies, parents, and employers who regularly employ handicapped persons, as well as employers who show interest in employing handicapped persons. One of the functions of this program would be to use a follow along system in which students in training programs would be followed through the program and a post-secondary follow-up, informal or otherwise, should be conducted on a regular basis. It is strongly believe that the needs

of handicapped student can best be met through a forum in which all community services for the handicapped are shared cooperatively.

REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON BUSINESS-RELATED ISSUES

The subcommittee on business-related issues, after lengthy data-gathering activities, conclude that Vigo County School Corporation/Covered Bridge Special Education District currently have a very positive community-based employment program for mildly handicapped students in place. We believe that the school corporation should pursue the following recommendations in an effort to improve and expand the present program.

(1) Developing an inventory of community resources: The utilization of community resources will vary with the severity of the handicapping conditions of the students. For the mildly handicapped the school corporation should identify, organize, and coordinate a regular program of employer visits to special classes. Sympathetic employers who have previous experience with handicapped students should be recruited and scheduled by the corporation to talk to classes about work, describe their businesses, and conduct mock interviews. For moderately and severely disabled students, the emphasis in community resources should be on site experiences where the employer discusses his business in the actual work environment. The Chamber of Commerce could serve as an appropriate resource. The implementation of a community-based vocational program with emphasis on the utilization of community resources would necessitate a decreased staff/student ratio.

(2) Publicity for the Program: The school corporation should begin to develop an inventory of publicity items for use in local media. Such an inventory should include radio spot commercials, TV spots and stock print

items. These should then be circulated to local media to publicize the district's programs.

(3) Internships: As a step toward competitive employment the school district should expand opportunities for special education students to participate in non-paid internships. We believe this to be an essential part of a community-based employment training experience.

(4) Employment Opportunities: We believe that it is extremely important that the Vigo County School Corporation lead the larger employment community by providing paid employment opportunities for special education students.

Meeting the Challenge

For six months this committee has examined all information pertaining to vocational education for special students which it could access. Our sources have included legislation, data, expert speakers, interviews, site visits and others. We have examined the information from different perspectives and considered the interests of the special student, the students' family, the school, the community and enterprise. By working in subcommittees and considering different aspects of the total challenge, we have used different foremats, and each subcommittee has issued its own recommendations. As a group, however, we find that there are three common issues: **access, evaluation, and programs.** The following recommendations address these three issues that are woven throughout our three separate reports. These are the recommendations of our entire committee which address the issues that are common to all our individual subcommittee reports.

ACCESS: We have made three recommendations pertaining to access to vocational education for special students.

(1) The ability to be employed is central to the ability to participate in our society. For the special student preparation for employment must begin in the elementary school.

(2) If handicapped students are to make the transition from school to work the school corporation must provide vocational courses, vocational evaluation, training, counseling and placement services not now available.

(3) The school corporation should develop a program to regularly inform special students, their parents and the wider community about services provided.

EVALUATION: We make the following recommendation pertaining to vocational evaluation for special students.

(1) Legislation requires and the school corporation should provide an assessment of the interests, abilities and special needs of handicapped students with respect to successful completion of vocational education programs. This assessment should be included as a component of the Individualized Educational Plan, and should strongly impact the design of the student's entire educational program. Teachers and parents must be involved in the process from the outset.

PROGRAMS: We have made recommendations pertaining to special vocational programs in the following four areas:

(1) Curriculum: A special vocational education curriculum committee should be formed consisting of special education and vocational teachers, who should be trained in curriculum modification. This committee should address appropriate special vocational curriculum

for use throughout the corporation. The committee should report directly to the central administration.

(2) Training Environment:

a. Preparation for employment appears to succeed best in the environment in which the employment will take place. We therefore recommend that Vigo County School Corporation expand its community-based and field-based employment training programs.

b. Resources should be reorganized to reflect a focus skills which are organized in occupational clusters. Classroom based training should be followed by school based work experience, and/or community based employment experiences.

(3) Teacher In-Service: Both special education teachers and vocational teachers should be provided with in-service training if they are to function effectively in special vocational education.

(4) Job Placement and Follow-Up: An effective occupational preparation program for the handicapped must include job placement. We recommend that:

a. the school corporation expand its placement services and develop cooperative arrangements with other community agencies involved in job placement. Through these cooperative arrangements the corporation should become involved in post-secondary employment follow-up to generate feedback for program evaluation.

b. The school corporation should lead the larger employment community by providing both non-paid internships and paid employment opportunities for special education students.